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The True Uses of American Revolutionary History.

AN

ORATION

DELIVERED

BEFORE THE AUTHORITIES

OF

THE CITY OF BOSTON,

ON MONDAY, THE FIFTH OF JULY, 1841, BEING THE DAY SET APART FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE SIXTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY GEORGE TICKNOR CURTIS.

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ORATION.

The age for declamation upon the American Revolution has passed away. Five and sixty years have come and gone, since our ancestors made themselves free by a Declaration, followed by a seven years' war to establish its propositions and realize its theories. On each successive anniversary of the day when that paper protest became the act of the American people, all over the land—in city and town and village, the growing millions have been wont to listen to its great truths, to discussion of its principles, its doctrines and the doings of its afterday of strife and sacrifice and blood and triumph and final peace. The whole American mind, for more than half a century, with its native intensity and enthusiasm, has turned itself, periodically, to the associated recollections of this day; and has availed itself of all that they can bestow in the way of public speech.—Could we, indeed, divest ourselves of all

that repetition has thus effected upon the mind, and invest the moral day with a new interest, making it like nature's day, which dawns successively just like the preceeding, but is yet ever novel and fresh to the craving sense of novelty, its topics might not pall upon the wearied ear. But this is now impossible. We cannot

> Roam the same old shore at will,
> In the fond faith that we are children still.

And perhaps this exhaustion of the topic, for the purposes of public address, is owing in part to its very nature. There are indeed depths in the soul of man, which may be sounded constantly and forever, and they will still give forth the response of intense emotion and undying interest. But the topics which can thus from age to age never exhaust or be exhausted, do not concern the temporal interests of his being. They belong not to history—not to the doings of his ancestors in field or senate—not to the revolutions of government—not even to the great ideal of Liberty, which the struggling patriot, of all ages, worships amid chains and beneath the very heel of despotism. They are of interests, which stretch far away from the concerns of his political to the realms of his spiritual existence; and perhaps these

are the only topics, which, from age to age, can, in the way of stated public address, claim and excite the untired attention of mankind.

There are other subjects and other occasions of oratory, which admit of the highest interest, and the result of which lives after them. These however are the occasions, when the immediate and momentous interests of the present time demand and create high excitement. The orations of Demosthenes have come down to us and to all civilized men, not merely because they are clothed in that indestructible tongue, which has been styled "shrine of the genius of the old world," but mainly because a real business and purpose in hand, to be effected by speech, gave that speech a winged energy that has wafted it over the space of ages, and now wakes in the modern breast a living sympathy with those whose affairs were the occasion of its utterance. Such were the occasions of all the great remnants of oratory that have come to us from any age or tongue. Such are the great uses of public speech. When, in the Market-Place, the Senate, or the Forum, crowds are hanging upon those words which are to make or mar great interests; when some great politic doctrine is to be laid as a corner stone deep in the foundations of a state, then it is, that the divine fac-

ulty which is in man may so utter itself, that the utterance shall live—live in the event which it creates. First creating, and then becoming part and substance of the event itself, it shall be known to all coming time, to which the knowledge of that event shall reach.

But of that lower department of oratory, devoted to the mere purposes of eulogium and declamation, little that is substantial can be predicated, among any people, and it soon reaches its utmost results. Hence, also it is, in part, that the commemoration of this day, by public addresses, loses its interest as society becomes more cultivated.

We are not met, however, to read lectures upon rhetoric. But I notice these things, in passing, as leading naturally and appropriately to the topic about to be spoken of. There is a decline in the interest with which the public ear listens to these addresses. But because I notice and remind you of this, let me not be supposed—do not suppose yourselves—to be wanting in true American feeling, or a due share of patriotism. Who can ever feel, of and on this day, in any other than a spirit of deep gratitude to the God of Nations, that in the wisdom of his Providence, he permitted the meridian of a mid-summer's sun to blaze down upon that immortal

instrument, which the brave and great dared to enact in the face of day, and then to publish to the world? Who can fail to exult, to praise, to bless, that he has caused such momentous consequences to human happiness to flow from that single act; that he prospered the work of those courageous men; that he suffered them to escape the risks and reap the glory, and then to go down to honored graves, leaving their histories embalmed in the affections of a nation, as, of old, the Kings of Egypt went to the stately chambers of their pyramid, and there lie, in their mortal preservation, for the reverential visits of many thousand years.

We have done all that we can well do, with this mode of treating our history and commemorating its events. Yet, do I propose to forget the past? Would I cut loose from the great sheet-anchor of our destiny, and send the political and social system to drift over the wide waters of a boundless future, or on the turbulent waves of the present, careless of the great dead, their principles, their deeds, their renown, their example, their splendid illustration of the great truths of man's political and social state? Ah no—midst the hot haste and din of the present,

> "The voices of the dead
> Sound like the distant torrent's fall."

So far am I from depreciating history, that I maintain this void which we now feel in our capacity to be stirred by oratorical commemoration of its events, to be a state of progress and transition towards a better use of all that has gone before us. A far other and better thing is presently to be done, by and for the American people, by American scholars, with the history of their country. That history is to be written—written in all the forms and for all the varied uses, in and for which the literature of a country chronicles the teachings of its life experience. The laborious historian—they are now at their work, groping among archives "where the worm feedeth sweetly on treasuses covered by the dust of time"—he who grasps the remote origin and deep principles of a nation's progress, and with just estimate of the true importance of minute details to the illustration of great events, works out the gorgeous tapestry that is to adorn the chambers of national glory;—the more humble compiler, whose epitome performs a useful office for childhood, before it is led into the greater halls where hang the panoramas of its country's destiny;—the faithful biographer, who portrays, with affectionate zeal, the action and the influence of some one mind, that played its noble part in the

great drama of the past; these and the works of these are to furnish the material, the stimulus and impulse of American historic patriotism.

This history is to be written—it is also to be read. In the place of vague traditions and impressions derived from the glowing generalities of some popular orator, there may be a degree of exactness of knowledge, a familarity with the doings and characters of our fathers, which the combined powers of the press and of universal education can hardly fail to achieve. And not for ourselves alone, is the great problem of our Revolution to be written out in durable historic form. The world will be glad to know it. Already, what has been done has enabled a gifted foreign statesman, with the instinctive appreciation that belongs to the highest order of minds, to carve the moral features of our Washington in a gem of chaste and exact simplicity—as the cameo preserves the likeness of the greater portrait; and already by indefinite multiplication into other lands, it is given to millions to be held in the mind's eye, and worn in their heart of hearts.

Looking then upon the present state of the public feeling and taste, in respect of this day, as a state of transition, it will not be inappropriate to the occasion, to ask you to consider with me, in some of its

aspects, the true uses of American Revolutionary History.

The history of a people bears the same relation to their present condition, tone, character and future destiny, as that of the individual bears to his. Of the single human soul, how much its present state and future course are shaped by what it has passed through, from earliest childhood to the present hour, is an observation familiar to all reflection and lying on the very surface of human life. All that it has done and suffered; opportunity wasted or gloriously improved; difficulties overcome, great achievements, wise lessons, deep joys, deeper pains; the long forgotten but ever influential teachings of experience, the great teacher,—these have made the man, as he is and is to be, far more than any innate qualities. So may we image the general heart and mind and present state of a whole nation. It looks back upon noble efforts and lofty deeds; great maxims laid at the foundation of its institutions; mighty truths, reclaimed by its wise and brave, for it and for all mankind, from the domains of error; victories on land and sea; the tribulation of its days of sorrow; the councils, the teachings, the example of its mighty dead—heroes and sages who achieved for it all that it prizes as its own; and these shed a

light, an illustration upon its actual condition, and guide it to the true perception of its duty and destiny. They do more,—they are essential to the right appreciation and true theory of its institutions. The institutions of no country, severed from its history, and taken in their actual state of the mere present, can ever be rightly understood, or lead to happy issues. If they are free, what are the limits of that freedom, as prescribed at their formation and settled by usage? If they are despotic, whence came the principle of oppression with which they are tainted? If they were gained by battle and victory of the sword, who were the men that fought that great fight of freedom, what did they propose to themselves, what did they do, what did they abstain from doing? Such are the inquiries to be made familiarly by men, who are to administer for themselves the great boon of public liberty, transmitted by those whose work is done and who now rest, in Heaven, from their toils.

Hence, too, is drawn—as applied to political truth, the true philosophy of precedent; that high moral obligation to adhere to what the wise established of old, until what is wiser is found in the new. Hence the duty of looking back upon history, that inasmuch as the whole state of man, here on this earth, indi-

vidually, politically, nationally, should be one of real improvement, and is one of necessary connection with what has gone before, as well as with what is to come after him, while he stretches forth one hand to the future, he may with the other lean upon the past.

All this is eminently true, and this use is eminently important, with such a history as that of our Revolution. It is not on what was actually and merely done, on the fourth of July 1776, that the chief glory of even our exultation centres. It is not merely that our fathers, then and there, in the city of Philadelphia, hurled defiance at their sovereign, and demonstrated to him and the world that their duty of allegiance was at an end. It is not that they took up arms and fought bravely, and finally triumphed, after years of doubt and occasional defeat.

The principles upon which they proceeded, and which they established for future ages; their personal characters and example; the objects which they sought; the basis whereon they placed the liberties for which they fought; are all subjects of inquiry as glorious, and far more important, than their mere actual deeds. Whatever, in the period of revolutionary history, illustrates these inquiries, is most

important to posterity. We are wont to speak of this day as the national birth day—the point of time, from which, when severed from foreign rule and liberated from that condition which has ever been the effect of proconsular governments, in all history, the people, their institutions, their moral, social and commercial conditions put on the garb and port and separate existence of a new nation. But it is not to be forgotten that this period was the period of a revolution in government; that in one and a very important sense, it was almost confined to a change in rulers—the removal of one form of government and the creation, for ourselves, of another. Starting from the full grown pride and power and independence of our present national existence, and tracing back the course of time, less than a century has elapsed, since in these very streets where we now walk in the security of our own sovereignty, a foreign government was seen and acknowledged in all the daily transactions of life, and the proud authority of this Republic was an unknown name upon the earth. Still farther back from this period, we trace our origin to the bosom of that mixed Saxon and Norman race, which had enthroned itself in the British Isles, and there we are at the national home of childhood. The letters, the history, the glory

of England—the great body of its law which centuries had built up with the fabric of its institutions, and which its emigrant children bore with them to the farthest bounds of their pilgrimage and planted on the remotest soil—are all ours. From the days of Alfred, forward through more than seven centuries, institutions, laws and customs had their origin in England, which are now spread over the states of this Union, wrought into the habits and interests of the people. The Revolution is therefore obviously to be regarded in two aspects. In one view, the period was the period of a sudden disrupture of the colonial from the parent state. It is most obviously important, therefore, to mark, in the history and doings of that time, how much of all that constituted the political and social condition, was torn away with that revulsion; to discriminate between mere Revolution in the forms of government and an overthrow of the main structure of society; in short, to note how much was spared, while much was removed. Now it is notorious, that our fathers conducted this Revolution, against the king's government and not against the institutions of the country. They tore up no ancient landmarks, except those which denoted the state of colonial bondage. They proceeded with the machinery of society as they found it.

The provincial and continental authorities displaced those of the crown, and went on to arm the country for civil war, without loosening any of the bonds which held society together. Without resorting to the fiction under which the Parliament of Charles I. made war upon the king in the king's name, they took up arms for an independent government of their own, and not to eradicate the spirit or institutions of that civilization which they had derived from home. When in the Declaration of Independence they set forth the whole substance of the controversy and the objects at which they aimed; moving on some of the most solid principles of the British Constitution, as well as the inalienable rights of man, they clearly demonstrated that their design was to "institute new government;" but not to go beyond what the abolition of the old forms required.

It will be asked, what is the import of this to the present time?

Not to give it any practical bearing upon any modern subject, I cannot but think that this forbearance, whether it was the purpose of a wise forecast, or the happy tendency of the national temper, or the result of circumstances, was most fortunate for the country. I cannot but think that we owe to it, as much as to the lucky accidents of our position and our

vast physical resources, what the country has become. Certain and manifest it is, that we owe to it the fact, that when the country was freed by the final accomplishment of Revolution, society did not have to be reconstructed from its foundation; that only a form of government had to be framed; and that immediately and, as if from a goal on the race course, the young giant started on his career. Let us suppose —not that our fathers, from the imperious necessity of their position, or from a depraved appetite for destruction and overthrow, had uprooted the whole foundations of the social state—but that with an aim to be thorough in their work, stimulated by some degree of political hatred, they had banished all that they could, of British origin, save their language and their blood. To narrow the hypothesis to a single illustration, let us imagine that when the last band of British soldiery left the shore, the American people had cast after them into the sea the whole body of the Law of England: and had then turned to construct for themselves, out of nothing, a jurisprudence, upon which to found the social and political relations of the country. Think you, that in less than three quarters of a century, this country could have reached its present height? Think you, that without history to draw from, without precedent and

ancient usage, without an unwritten law from the expansive principles of which public and private rights could derive definition and adjustment, you would have seen this harmonious developement of society that is now going on? Think you that the public and international relations of the country could have acquired that dignity which now belongs to them, and that the new Republic, of a little more than sixty years standing among nations, could have spoken—as it has lately spoken—to the parent state, in terms of an absolute equality and with a moral power which may supersede the use of arms?

But this topic, more abstract than perhaps befits the occasion, would lead to remote speculations. Suffice it to say, that in viewing the revolutionary history of the country, it is equally important and interesting to note what was carefully preserved, as well as to exult over what was bravely overthrown.

The other aspect in which this period of our history is to be viewed is, of course, as the period of assuming a separate national existence and character. It has been somewhat fashionable, of late years, especially with orators on this anniversary, to bring the period when the idea of absolute independence and separation from Great Britain began to be entertained, down to very near the eve of the Decla-

ration. In straining this point, we have overlooked important facts in the constitutional history of the country. Doubtless, Independence had not become the fixed determination of the people, for any considerable time before it was enacted by them through their Representatives. When James Otis argued, for the inhabitants of this town, the great cause against writs of assistance, fifteen years before the Declaration, perhaps neither he nor any others of the leading men of that day, entertained the project of separation from England. There existed, too, we know, among all classes, after all, a deep affection for the mother country, which made them reluctant to sever ancient ties; an affection for the old original stock of the British blood in the British people; of which Jefferson and his coadjutors—drafting the Declaration—felt it necessary to say, "we must endeavor to forget our former love for them, and to hold them as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war, in peace friends." Still, the whole constitutional position of the American people, as having rights and liberties independent of the will of king, parliament, or people of England, had been matter of public discussion long before the first overt acts of independence. It had been broached in the discussions growing out of the Charters: and still later, if we

may trust what has survived to us of Otis's celebrated argument, it was as fully and completely claimed by him, as it was afterwards in the Declaration. Of that memorable oration, although little more has reached us than tradition of an immense energy, enriched by vast learning and stimulated by a courage fearless of all consequences, enough is preserved to show, that the idea of rights inherent in the people of America as a distinct people, was familiar to his mind. The whole argument drawn from the law of nature with a force and vehemence which it had never known before; the planting of these colonies by their founders—or, as he magnificently phrased it, the "disforesting bare creation"—by the sweat of their own brows, at the hazard of their own lives, without aid or comfort from the Government of England, or from England itself, as a nation; the broad distinctions recognized from time to time in charters and statutes between the people of the colonies and the people of the realm; above all, the tyranny of taxation without representation, a maxim caught from *his* lips and rung through the land; were all pressed by him to the service of his positions, and show that he looked upon his countrymen as of right entitled to a separate national existence.

Henry too in Virginia, with less of scholarship than

his accomplished northern contemporary, but with the same patriotic purpose and with a fire of soul all his own, had been accustomed to treat the relations between the people of America and the people of England in the same manner, and to declare the same principles. So had Jefferson and the rest of the great band; and when they went into council, to concentrate the energies of their country, for the struggle, however reluctantly on some accounts they might have taken the step, they went possessed of the whole argument, and spoke as the representatives of a people already sovereign. There is in their language a full tone of nationality, founded on impregnable positions of law and justice, which renders it impossible to regard the Declaration as the scheme of men who had *suddenly* resolved on the overthrow of existing forms of government.

It might indeed have cost them an effort and a pang. We may well credit all the accounts that have reached us of the contending emotions which agitated their hearts. Bitter tears may have flowed; doubts may have wrestled with their souls; dim visions of the scaffold may have loomed in the horison of the future; and it may have needed all the eloquence of the grand impetuous Virginian, to sweep them on to their purpose. But all this only

shows that they were men of principle, whose purposed enterprise was full of dangers which they might well dread, but to which they were impelled by the highest law that can govern human nature—a law, which alone in all the realities of existence realizes the ancient fiction of destiny—the law of duty. That enterprise was to declare, by solemn enactment, what this whole people already felt in its inmost consciousness, the sovereign rights and character of an independent nation. Declaring these things, they spoke of deep and immutable rights; of the most transcendant interests of man's temporal existence; of fundamental laws, to which, in civil society, he is rarely driven, but by the intolerable abuses to which it sometimes gives birth. They had been more than human, or they had been dishonest men, not to have been moved. The mere conspirator, seeking personal agrandizement in revolution, rarely deals much with principles. A few catch-words, thrown among the multitude whose passions are his most powerful machinery, are all the resources of an intellectual kind of which he has need. Hence, a degree of coolness in his proceedings, and a calmness in approaching danger, unknown to men who appeal heartily to the understandings of mankind—who stir in themselves and

others the depths of human reason, and with its reason the strongest emotions of the human heart.

The grand principle illustrated in the assumption by our ancestors of a separate national existence, the grand doctrine in political science then established, was the right in mankind to change or abolish the government over them. This right seems to us, of this day, one of the plainest of all truths. Accustomed to the direct action of the popular will upon the administrators of government, accustomed even to changes in fundamental laws by the action of majorities, we may be disposed to marvel at the doubts which honest patriots have entertained, and to sneer, in our haughty democracy, at the pretensions which kings and rulers of the earth have set up. Yet you shall take this abstract question and sit down in the closet, to debate it in the seriousness of an honest heart, and you will find that there are few questions in moral or political science more difficult of solution, and when solved, few more difficult of application to circumstances. That governments, existing, have a right to exist; that it is their duty to preserve their powers and to continue to govern; that loyalty, like the principle of gallantry in man to woman, though kept alive by a sentiment, is founded in something deeper than a sentiment: and that

revolution must ever be a state of rights conflicting with rights, to end, by God's blessing, with the triumph of the greater rights of mankind; are all propositions to which your inquiries and convictions will be led. On the other hand, you will meet the obvious fact, that governments exist for the advantage of mankind, and that when they cease to perform their proper functions of promoting justice and happiness, there must be a right to remove them. This seems to be the whole substance of the matter. But having arrived at this, there are vast difficulties in the application. Where to draw the line; when to decide that a greater wrong is done by submission than would be done by resistance: and to see clearly the guiding object of human happiness and right, that is to be set on high, as the pillar of fire—have tasked the powers and tried the souls of patriots and martyrs in all past time, who have gained any point of human liberty, or left to it the blessing of their example.

Difficult and weighty as was this question, it was settled by the American Revolution. It was then tried and settled for the first time, upon discussion, principle and argument, before the wager of battle into which the issue was merged. There is no other country, with the exception of England, in

whose history prior to the same period, there is found any analogous proceeding. Even in England, until the Revolution which dethroned the first Charles Stuart, there does not begin to be any solution of this question, and it needs but a glance into history, to see that a parallel question was not then raised. The Parliament, at first, proceeded against the King, without any at least open design of overthrowing his government. A civil war followed; but before it was concluded and before the question of a fundamental change in the government could be fairly raised before the people and decided by the people, a military despotism had in fact fastened itself upon the country. The trial and execution of the King, against some of the plainest principles of the constitution, is no more an illustration of the right to institute new government, than any other judicial murder which stains the pages of history. The King being dead, a government followed, which can in no sense be regarded as the deliberate enactment or creation of the people.

Nor was there any discussion of this direct question, which really amounts to a fair issue upon the subject. Pamphlets were produced on both sides, for and against the divine right of Kings; but the

question of deliberately remodelling their government was never fairly before the people.

It is needless to say that the Revolution which placed William and Mary upon the throne, did not settle this question. Nothing more was then done, than to change the succession; a proceeding not unknown in monarchies before, partially recognised at the time, as was supposed, in the British Constitution, but constituting a case clearly distinguishable from a total abolition of the form of the government itself.

It was reserved for that portion of the British race seated on this continent and who had then become the American people, to propound, illustrate and establish this right, before the world. The circumstances in which they were placed tested the question to its fullest extent. They were colonies—a portion of empire, which, in all theories of government, ancient and modern, had been held in a state of political servitude. Imperial Rome had set its foot upon the necks of its provincial subjects; and the modern nations of Europe, until a very recent time, seem to have shaped their colonial systems upon the same model of proud, but mistaken policy. On the other hand, our ancestors were a people who had proceeded from the freest country on earth.

English liberty, as it had been gained in the successive struggles of many ages, was their birthright. The common law—which, divested of some of its feudal principles, is the very nursing fountain of freedom—with all the jealous sanctity in which it clothes individual rights, and with all the vigilance and bold outline with which it defines the several powers and functions of the state, had accompanied and entrenched them in their new country. To that country they had come, not by direction, or even sanction of the parent state, to enlarge the bounds of empire, but upon their own enterprise, for their own purposes. Here, they had grown to a numerous and great people, and here they prepared, on the grandest scale, to try a high question of human right, to stand in history as a precedent for all after times.

But now mark how the manner, in which this great right of revolution was claimed and exercised, defines, for future guidance, its limits and occasions, and distinguishes public virtue from public crime. The proceeding, by which the form and authority of the government were abrogated, was the proceeding of a whole people, not of sections or factions. The eminent men, who played the great parts of that drama, were not leaders, ambitious of

whatever a new order of things would bring to them, of gain, or office, or distinction. They were rather the exponents and representatives of their time and country, the instruments raised up for the wants of their age. No man, or set of men, in any part of the world, no writer, of any subsequent time, has charged them with sinister designs. They stand acquitted of this, before mankind. The act of revolution was the act of a nation: first ascertaining upon deliberate inquiry, that it had the right of self-government, and that government by others was intolerable, because happiness and justice where set at nought, and then proceeding manfully to the battle for the right. Right, too, and principle, of the highest grade, were the motives on which they fought, for we all remember that the actual and immediate grievance was less injurious than the violation of principles which it involved.

This is the case, and this alone, which can justify revolution, civil war and their attendant evils. A mere ambition to be great, in individuals, or in masses; a passion to fill a large space on the theatre of the world, can never assume the lofty claims and secure the solid results of liberty. What is that Liberty for which men have fought in the field—about which they have speculated in the closet, and

which they sometimes hail as did the Ephesians, calling on their goddess of the free and stirring chase. Liberty, they cry, great is Liberty! oh Liberty, in thy name have not men done great deeds? Have they not dethroned kings and cast out tyrants and done many wonderful works? Shall not thy ample portion be our inheritance? Shall we not be thy sons? who shall gain say us? And when the cry is loudest, there comes from the far centre of everlasting Truth an oracle for their instruction. Liberty, it answers, is my ordination. It is based on principle —on law, whose "voice is the harmony of the world and whose seat is in the bosom of God." It is not your will—not your passion for glory. It is not in the voices of majorities—not in democracy, not in oligarchy. It is in Justice—ordained before majorities were counted; attainable by the pure unbiassed reason of mankind, but existing independent of that reason, and so not lost, when men have lost the high perception of its truths.

One of the chief characteristics of the revolutionary period, to be studied and prized by us of this generation—by all generations—was the nationality of its patriotism. There were unquestionably local interests to be conciliated and local claims to be considered, in the civil and military arrangements of

the time. But this intensity of zeal for sectional interests is a thing of modern growth. You may look into the history of the Revolution, and although you recognize there occasionally what were then as now the peculiarities of our political and geographical situation, you no where find an impracticable dogmatism in the assertion of local claims. One wide general spirit of national feeling absorbed the interests of the whole country. It may be said that a common danger, a common object against a common enemy, united all sections in one effort; and that therefore the public spirit displayed in the conduct of individuals wears more the appearance of a wider patriotism, than seems to belong to public conduct in these "piping times of peace." Let this be admitted, to some extent. Still you may find in the patriotism of that time, an elevation, a spirit of self sacrifice, a broad national feeling, which the pressure of common dangers will not alone account for, and which must be taken as the evidence of a loftier public tone of action and feeling, than is, sometimes, since exhibited. How clearly it shines forth in the writings of Washington; who, from the time when he denied all communication from the British officers, until they addressed him as the Commander in Chief of the armies of AMERICA, down to

that graceful and wise Farewell with which he turned away to the shades of Mount Vernon, never ceased to embrace his whole country in his great paternal heart.

But lest it be said that Washington, in his military life, had practical need to unite the country by the cultivation of national feeling, or that in both his military and civil life he towers, as an example, above the level of all other men in history, let me remind you that something of the same spirit was not wanting in the general character of his time. Others, of lesser note, were animated by it, as you well know: and I have not rightly read such of the history of this land as I know, if it was not a characteristic of the revolutionary age.

But whether we look for it to the general spirit of the time, or to the great exemplars of the age, it is the cultivation of that spirit which is to save this vast republic from falling into speedy dissolution—from crumbling into magnificent fragments of empire, to lie strewn across a continent that now owns its wide and free dominion. It is impossible to look abroad upon public affairs, without seeing causes at work which may divide this country into parts. The intensity with which peculiar interests are pursued, and the consequent creation of counter interests and

a supposed necessary rivalry; the ambition of those who play upon sectional feeling as if it were

"A pipe for fortune's finger,
To sound what stop she please;"

the indiscretion which pushes interference where the passions and rights of others—the most formidable union on earth—are instantly roused; are some of the causes which threaten the national stability and peace. Nothing can stay these causes from quickly producing their effect, but the spirit of moderation, of compromise, and that elevated statesmanship in the ambitious, which is both able and willing to serve the whole country. For the cultivation of this spirit, the people at large are responsible. They are responsible, because they can make their interests conform to its requisitions. They are responsible; because they can make their servants obey its dictates. If men will seek public station and responsibility, let them be made to feel that a wide and national, not a narrow and sectional patriotism is the price which they are to pay for distinction; and let them be dismissed to disgrace and obscurity, if they are unequal to this high tone of character.

Such, oh countrymen, seem to me to be some of the lessons to be read on that instructive page,

whereon is recorded the history of the Revolution. The theme grows upon us as we advance in it, and far exceeds the limits of such an occasion as this. Called, in accordance with a long established usage, to speak of what might be appropriate to this anniversary, I could not entertain you with that general declamation which has merely tended to inflate the national vanity. I repeat the assertion, that the time for this manner of treating our history has passed away. The mind craves a deeper insight, a more exact knowledge, a more conscientious appreciation and application of the past, than mere oratory can reach. Happy is it, if oratory can stimulate to some such uses of the past, in the intensely absorbed and apparently forgetful present. History, that "philosophy teaching by example," appeals to us with a persuasive authority to be true to the destiny shaped for us in this great beginning. Looking back then upon the past and forward to the future, trusting that what began in glory may issue in honor—that what was so deeply founded in principle, in reason, in love of country, in the highest interests of human nature, may endure through whatever perils it shall meet, so that it shall accomplish its full and perfect work for all of the family of man within our borders—let us take counsel of Hope. Behold her, as she stands—

the firm, brave, but gentle spirit—leaning on that anchor, the emblem of her soul, with her calm eye reading in the depths of the upper Heaven what it has ordained for man.

Hazard not, she says, the existence of those institutions, in the perpetuity of which, alone, is the only chance of Freedom for those who are not already free. Trust in the gradual expansion and perfection of society, in the light of religion, letters, truth and law. Trust in God. Be content with that instumentality, in the cause of human improvement, which he assigns to the men of a single age. Grasp not at his prerogative, by aiming to monopolize the whole work. Remember that never yet has there been an evil, to which the learning, the power and resources of a people have addressed themselves with faith and patience and calmness of endeavor, and in the true spirit of their institutions, which He has not removed. Be faithful—be patient. Ages may roll away, before the work is perfected, but it will be done. Hear the warning voices of your fathers, as they bend from their seats on high—

> Trust Him, as we trusted,
> Then rest, as we rest.

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